

# Your Ultimate Dad-to-Be Cheat Sheet



*Fatherhood: It's not rocket science, guys -- but it's not all that obvious either. The following is a list of skills you will need to develop as a dad. This is your chance to get ahead of the game. So before that kid of yours makes a break for daylight, learn:*

**How much your child should drink in the first weeks.** "It is important to remember that a baby's stomach is very tiny, so the volume required at a feeding is quite small, and varies within the first few days of life," says Sunny Carlisle, a Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator and a DONA International Certified Birth Doula. "On Day One, a newborn's stomach is about the size of a shooter marble and holds about five ml (approximately a teaspoon), but around Day Three, a baby's stomach is about the size of a ping pong ball and can hold about 25 ml (approximately a tablespoon + two teaspoons). By Day Ten, a newborn's stomach is about the size of a large egg and holds about 60 ml (approximately four tablespoons). A baby should seem content after a feeding, but if he/she is fussy, try burping and offering the breast or bottle again."

**How many car seats to buy.** "You'll probably need two (I know, it's ridiculous)," says Harlan Cohen, author of *Dad's Pregnant Too!* "The [infant seat](#) which snaps into the base allows you to move the baby in and out of the car without waking them up. Then, you'll want a convertible seat (it 'converts' from backward facing to forward facing) for the next several years."

**How to count diapers.** Says Carlisle: "A baby should have at least one wet diaper by the end of the first day of life, and this should increase to five to six wet diapers by the end of the first week. Dirty diapers are going to vary a little bit, depending on whether baby is breastfed or formula-fed." Typically, one dirty diaper for each day baby's been alive works for all little ones in the first week (one dirty diaper on Day One, two dirty on Day Two, etc.) until Day Five or Six. "After this, a breastfed baby may have one-12 small stools per day; their stools will change color as mom's milk transitions from colostrum to mature milk, from blackish-green to tan to mustard yellow," continues Carlisle. "A formula fed baby may have fewer, larger stools that are more formed and are tannish in color."

**How to swaddle.** Dad Alex Antonowitsch says: "Ask the nurse how to 'swaddle' a baby. Basically, you [make a baby burrito](#) using a blanket. It simulates the coziness of the womb and helps the baby sleep." I swaddled my kids, and they are both now well behaved grade school children!

**How to handle the labor and delivery process.** "Take a class offered through the hospital or your doctor's office; take a free tour of the [labor and delivery](#) area; and read about the stages of labor and pain relief options for the mother," says Deborah Krahl, M.D., of The Mother Baby Center. "The more familiar you are with your surroundings and what to expect for each stage in labor, the more relaxed you will be when it happens."

**How to warm things up.** Learn how to do the feeding process before the kid checks out of the hospital. You might use a bottle-warming gizmo or heat it up by some other method. Regardless, make sure you don't get it too hot. About 98.5 degrees Fahrenheit is usually right, use a food-grade thermometer or the temperature monitor on your bottle warmer to measure. Go through the whole routine so that you don't have to awaken your wife/partner at 4 a.m. and ask, "Honey, how does this thing work?"

**How to pack a diaper bag.** "Diapers, wipes, a change of clothing (at least one), and a burp rag are essential [diaper bag](#) components -- and, if you are using [cloth diapers](#), don't forget to pack a wet bag for toting wet/soiled diapers back home!" says Carlisle. Formula-feeders should pack a few bottles, formula, and water (if using powered or liquid concentrate formula) unless you are traveling to an area where water safety isn't a concern. "If your baby uses a pacifier, having an extra in diaper bag may also be helpful," she adds. "Other valuable items may be a changing pad, [hand sanitizer](#), and baby toys or books, and a clean shirt for mom or dad as well."

**How to snap to it.** Know those little metal fasteners on [baby clothes](#)? They seem like NBD, but you better start practicing with them, ASAP, advises dad Myles Nye. He says snapping up a squirming baby in the middle of the night is no easy task. So get your snapping skills under control before the kid arrives.

**How to change a diaper.** "Baby boys turn into peeing fountains when cold air hits their little tummies, so learn to create a shield with the front of the diaper (the tape is on the back half)," says author/mom Pam McMurtry, adding that you might keep just a hand towel at the ready -- just in case. "Little girls need to have their private parts wiped from front to back, so as not to get fecal material in their genital area. Don't let a baby stay too long in a wet or dirty diaper, they'll get a rash and be harder to [potty train](#) later on."

**How to get rid of the evidence.** Dirty [diapers](#) must be dealt with. Some people have a whole system for wrapping up dirty diapers and popping them into a diaper pail. Others have [cloth diapers](#) that need washing. There are even diaper-optional houses (which, I suppose, have their own way of dealing with baby excrement). Figure out what you're going to do, and be ready to deal before this stuff hits the fan.

**How to get some zzz's.** "The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends having [newborn babies](#) sleep in the parents' room -- in either a crib, bassinet, or pack-and-play -- as it helps with frequent night feedings when the baby is close," says Carlisle. She adds that you should sleep when the baby sleeps (no matter how cliched this sounds). "Yes, your newborn is beautiful and it's difficult not to watch his/her cherub-like face while sleeping, but parents need sleep too. If the baby is napping, take a nap too!"

**How to be patient.** Since babies can't talk they have limited means of communication. One can only get across so much information by smiling, screaming, crying, whining, and cooing -- and so you may not have completely clear communication. Sometimes you won't get the message on the first pass. That's OK.

Be calm and hang in there. The screaming will pass. You're the grownup. (You are the grownup, right?)

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